

A Tribute Issue



WELL DONE: Dr Mahathir gives the thumbs-up as he prepares to sit in a Proton Waja in 2000. With him are (from left) Tan Sri Saleh Sulong and chief executive officer Tengku Tan Sri Mahaleel Tengku Ariff. On the right are Tan Sri Abu Hassan Omar and Dr Siti Hasmah

Malaysia has been called a 'lucky country' but luck will have very little to do with the resuscitation of the nation's economy.

What we need immediately is sheer hard work ...

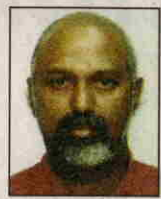
— Speaking at the Association of Banks and Financial Institutions' dinner on Aug 25, 1982.

The Government is committed to growth. The country has the resources, the political will and the potential to grow and prosper.

— Addressing the Association of Banks and Financial Institutions, August 1982.

A nation stands tall

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From the national car project to the 88-storey Petronas Twin Towers, Malaysia's achievements under the visionary leadership of Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad have instilled immeasurable pride and confidence in Malaysians and their capabilities. **K.P. WARAN** writes.

THE DICTIONARY DESCRIBES a visionary as one "full of foresight: characterised by unusually acute foresight and imagination" and it cannot be denied that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad fits the description to a T.

The many projects that he had conjured up for the benefit of the nation and the people had not only been implemented successfully but have won praises from within the country and at the international level.

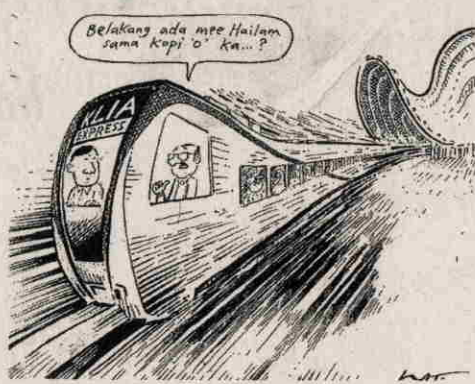
Many of the projects are seen as the foundation for his grand plan to take Malaysia into the realm of developed status — under his Vision 2020 concept — so that Malaysia can rub shoulders with the "big boys" and give the country a bigger say in international affairs apart from bringing better living standards and opportunities for Malaysians.

Asked at a conference here many years ago to give an insight into the conceptualisation of Vision 2020, Dr Mahathir said that as a doctor, Vision 2020 meant "a clear vision" to chart the future of the nation and to give the people a "destination" to head for.

"I also chose the year 2020 because I will not be around then and nobody can blame me. But if future leaders do not do enough to ensure continued progress, I will be there to haunt them," he said in jest and had the participants in stitches.

In late October 1982, when Dr Mahathir announced that Malaysia planned to produce its own car which was then expected to hit the streets in 1986, the common people rejoiced while the sceptics began to dig up facts and figures to "prove" that the project was not viable.

The critics' pronouncements included: "Much will depend on whether there is an effective transfer of know-how and on extending the project beyond body stamping. It is a capital-intensive operation with few spin-off benefits."



Others pointed out that when the first motor vehicle assembly plant was established in Malaysia in 1967, the Government declared that the establishment of an integrated motor vehicle industry would be achieved through a gradual increase in local content which after 15 years had not been achieved.

Those who proclaimed "Let not the Malaysian car be our Concorde" are probably at this very moment sitting behind the wheel of one of the many variants of Malaysian-made cars which crowd our roads.

Commercially launched on July 9, 1985 with the Proton Saga, the model line now includes the Waja, Satria GTi, Wira, Iswara, Arena, Perdana V6 and Juara while the second made-in-Malaysia car company, Perodua, is also producing several models. Today, Malaysian-made cars are known in 50 countries on five continents.

Dr Mahathir's push for the Malaysian car to incorporate sophisticated and world-class technology resulted in Proton upgrading its engineering capabilities with the acquisition of Lotus Group International Limited, a British automotive engineering company and manufacturer of luxury sports cars in October 1996. Together, Proton and Lotus offer large-scale manufacturing



SO FAR SO GOOD: Dr Mahathir appears to be impressed with the progress of the nation's first underground Light Rail Transit System station in 1996. Sharing his sentiment is Putra chairman Tan Sri Raden Soenarno (second left), managing director Mohd Nor Idrus (left) and Renong Bhd executive chairman Tan Sri Halim Saad (third left)



World-class transportation hub

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capabilities with world-class engineering expertise.

Malaysia has since embarked on producing motorcycles, light aircraft and has launched Measat 1 and 2 — comprising two high-powered HS376 satellites built by Boeing Satellite Systems to provide high-powered C-band and Ku-band capacity to meet the increasing Internet, telecommunication and broadcasting needs in the Asia-Pacific region.

Another project inspired by Dr Mahathir which continues to stand tall is the 88-storey Petronas Twin Towers. Soaring 452 metres up into the sky, the Twin Towers 88, declared the tallest buildings in the world, mark both in time and space a historic achievement and the national pride of Malaysia — a testimony of the capabilities and determination of the Malaysian people in bringing to reality a project of such a mammoth scale, an engineering feat unparalleled in the country.

The Kuala Lumpur International Airport is another Dr Mahathir initiative built not only to cater for the present demands but also to accommodate the ever expanding population taking to the skies to reach their destinations quickly.

The KLIA boasts the latest technology and state-of-the-art facilities, aimed at providing maximum passenger safety, comfort and convenience.

Situated in Sepang, it is designed and built to be an efficient, competitive and world-class hub airport for the Asia-Pacific region. Designed by renowned Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa, the KLIA is a spectacular feat of construction which combines futuristic technology, Malaysian culture and the rich, tropical splendour of its natural resources, and is regarded as one of the most modern and sophisticated airports in the Asia-Pacific region.

With a rambling roof resembling white Bedouin tents, the five-level KLIA boasts

the world's tallest air-traffic control tower, the biggest columnless hangar, the longest baggage conveyor belt system, the biggest passenger lounge and the capacity for 25 million people a year. The airport has a made-in-Malaysia, RM24 million Olympex flight information display system.

Dr Mahathir said of his brainchild: "KLIA is not just an airport. It is a piece of art, dedicated to beauty as well as the environment. It relates to the greenness and the forests of Malaysia, both inside and outside."

Another Kurokawa design forms the nerve centre of Kuala Lumpur's integrated rail transportation system. The KL Sentral Station is a state-of-the-art transportation hub, offering transportation and links to all residential, commercial and industrial areas within the federal capital and its outskirts.

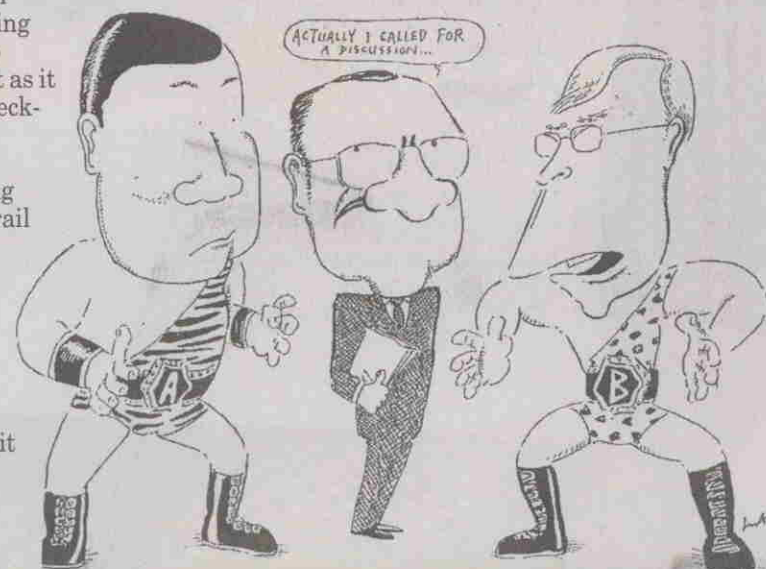
It is the first of its kind in the world, integrating four rail networks in one station, providing a direct link to KLIA in Putrajaya — the new Federal Government Administrative Centre, Cyberjaya and key areas within the Multimedia Super Corridor.

The only rail terminal linking an airport to several rail services plying Kuala Lumpur, this station is also dubbed as the Virtual City Airport as it houses an airport check-in and check-out facility and forms the central feature of an integrated transportation network, combining with feeder buses and commuter rail services to offer an efficient alternative to the current limitations of road travel.

It serves as a meeting point for the long haul Malayan Railways; Sistem Transit Aliran Ringan (STAR), an overhead railway system; Projek Usahasama Transit Ringan Automatik (PUTRA), a combination of overhead and



EXCITING MOMENT: Dr Mahathir pressing the yellow button that will trigger colourful smoke as part of the grand prix opening ceremony in 1997. With him are Tunku Muzaffar (left), Khairuddin and Datuk Bashir Ahmad (right)



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Much of the responsibility lies with the Muslim scholars and practitioners to instill among Muslims the right spirit and attitude that can help Muslims catch up with the others in the field of modern technology.

— Opening a conference on Islam and technology, June 1983.

We have to be conscious as well as concerned with the ethnic dimension of our Malaysian life. To be otherwise is to delude ourselves.

— On ethnic relations and nation building, January 1983.